In the claims:

Please cancel claims 1-5 and 19-23 without prejudice.

REMARKS

Claims 6-18 are pending in the above-identified divisional application.

Claims 1-5 and 19-23 have been cancelled without prejudice. The subject matter of those claims was prosecuted in the parent application. The specification has been amended to correct the Cross-Reference to Related Application section.

In the parent application, the Examiner restricted the claims into the following Groups: Group I, including claims 1-5 and 19-23 drawn to a filtration cell having membrane, and Group II, including claims 6-18 drawn to a process for transferring fluid to be filtered.

Claims 6-18 represent the non-elected claims from the parent Application No. 09/580,987. Claims 1-5 and 19-23 were prosecuted and allowed in the parent application. No new matter has been added by the above amendments.

Accordingly, entry of the Amendment and an early examination and Notice of Allowance are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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2/6/02 By: [signature]
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Enclosures

Marked-Up Version of Specification Section

--CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application is a divisional application of co-pending Application No. 09/580,987 filed May 30, 2000, entitled "METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR DIRECTLY SAMPLING A FLUID FOR MICROFILTRATION", which [This application] claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/136,668, filed May 28, 1999. The entire disclosures of U.S. Application No. 60/136,668 and U.S. Application No. 09/580,987 as filed are incorporated herein by reference.--.

TITLE OF THE INVENTION

Method And Apparatus For Directly Sampling A Fluid For Microfiltration

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/136,668, filed May 28, 1999.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Microfiltration is known as are filtration cells that produce a filtrate through microfiltration. U.S. Patent No. 4,818,493 discloses a filtration cell for separating a filtrate from a fluid, such as plasma from blood, by means of micro-filtration. U.S. Patent No. 5,000,923 discloses a particular filtration cell having application in the art of filtering plasma from blood by a microfiltration. U.S. Patent No. 4,695,430 discloses an automated apparatus for effecting the filtration of biological fluids using a filtration cell of the type disclosed in the aforesaid two patents, and then further processing the cell to analyze the filtrate for various biological aspects, such as blood clotting time.

In recent years, the process of filtering and analyzing the fluid has been further developed to the point where it is fully automated. There is, however, a remaining problem; namely the problem of specimen transfer. Present day microfiltration apparatus, such as the apparatus disclosed in the three above-cited patents and improvements thereon, provide a continuous flow operation for obtaining high quality biologic and other samples. Each specimen can be processed in about thirty seconds. Moreover, the capital cost for the equipment is less than alternative equipment for accomplishing the same result. Despite its advantages, such apparatus does not solve all the problems of automation. Current approaches to specimen transfer severely limit automation. Specimen transfer requires precision pumps and rinse solution. All automated specimen processing systems share these problems. This translates into increased equipment costs as well as biohazardous waste transfer and disposal costs.